

A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY AND STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES TOWARD
A DRESS CODE OF CERTAIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS,
PARENTS AND FACULTY

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The School of Graduate Studies
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by
Eldon L. Hutcheson
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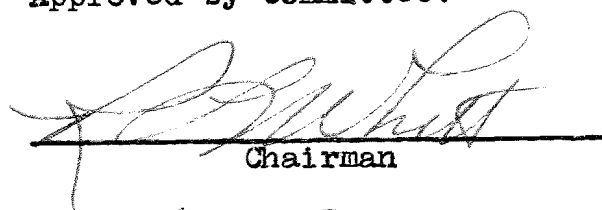
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Approved by Committee:


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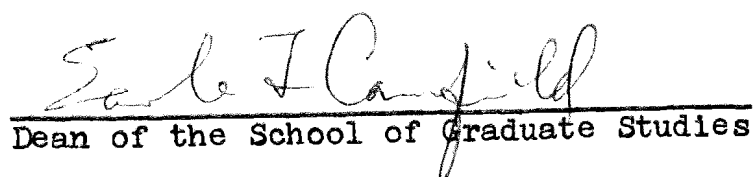

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, LIMITATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

There has been much concern and discussion over the issue of "dress code" policies of public high schools throughout this country today. Students, parents, and The American Civil Liberties Union are on one side of the issue; faculty, administrators, and boards of education are on the other side of the issue. The usual meeting place is the courtroom.

In many instances, the school has been on the losing end. In spite of the many court cases and courtroom decisions handed down, there is little information available regarding the effect a dress code has on the educational atmosphere of the school.

Does the school really need a "dress code" policy? Are students more inclined to grasp all the educational knowledge of the school system if they are "well-dressed?" Does the dress code policy infringe upon a basic right of the student? Do parents want the school to enforce a dress code policy upon their children? What are the thoughts of the school faculty? More important, what are the thoughts of the student himself?

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to collect information concerning the attitudes of students, parents, and school faculty regarding a school "dress code" policy, and (2) to review laws and legislation involved in the enforcement of "dress codes" by the school system.

Significance of the problem. School systems may be wasting valuable time trying to administer a "dress code" policy. Can a school afford to administer a policy whose constitutionality has been questioned and questioned again? Teaching is a complex business. Do students act the way they dress? When these factors are solved, it should help to clarify the stand a school district should take regarding the dress code.

Limitations of the problem. This research was limited to the students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve of the Manson Community School System and the Fort Dodge Community School System for the school year 1969-1970. In addition, all parents of those students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, and all school faculty personnel associated with grades ten, eleven, and twelve were polled and their attitudes and ideas are discussed. This study does not attempt

to interpret the honesty of the answers or the misinterpretation of the question by the subject.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Dress code. A dress code is a policy (usually written) of the school district stating the rules and regulations school students must abide with in regard to the style of clothing and personal appearance of the student.

Administrator. An administrator is one who develops and administers the educational program in a school district within the broad framework of the policy established by the people.

Student council. A student council is defined as a selected group of students whose duty it is to represent the student body.

III. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES USED

A questionnaire was used in this study to solicit the attitudes and responses of the different groups polled.

How developed. The items used in this questionnaire were composed by the Student Council of Fort Dodge Senior High School. It was developed after considerable debate over dress code issues between parents, administrators, faculty, and students.

Selection of respondents. A questionnaire accompanied by an explanatory letter and a copy of the dress code policy was sent to each student in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, each parent of a student or students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, and each school faculty member who was associated with grades ten, eleven, and twelve of the Fort Dodge Senior High School and the Manson Senior High School.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES OF THE DRESS CODE

Confusion, comment, and conflict are inevitable when the style of dress or the physical appearance of teenagers differ greatly from the more conservative or traditional ways and demonstrates their distinction from adult society. The dispute over what is proper display of the human body is probably as old as mankind himself, but this dispute seems much more prominent today because of the increased amount of press notice given to these conflicts.

There has been much student unrest in this nation's colleges and high schools. Young people are taught to "think for themselves," to "be individuals," and "make impacts on this world," etc.

One way to try to verify our existence is through body decoration which helps to establish our individualism. Establishing identity is especially crucial for teenagers. In their search for self, they adventure into new modes of behavior within a society which offers many alternatives. Not surprising, therefore, are their susceptibility to fads and their frequent concern with appearance. Clothes, cosmetics, and grooming aids allow each to experiment with the image he wishes to present, and to test its effectiveness by eliciting positive or negative responses from others.¹

¹Mary Ellen Roach, "Adolescent Dress: Understanding the Issues," Journal of Home Economics, LXI (November, 1969), 694.

There are times when the parents, as well as the students, wish to contest matters of dress policy with the school district. Forty years ago (1930-1931) the Supreme Court of North Dakota ruled that a board of education may forbid pupils to wear metal heel plates when they damaged the floor more than is normal and when noise and confusion are such as to affect the conduct and discipline of the school.

At the beginning of the school year (1930-1931) the principal and superintendent noticed the damage to the floors and the noise and confusion caused by boys with metal heel plates on their shoes. Murry Stromberg was one of those boys who complied with the requests of the school officials to remove the heel plates. When his mother discovered that he had removed the metal plates, she told Murry to replace them. Upon his return to school, the boy was refused admission until the taps were removed. Murry's parents insisted that it was their prerogative to decide what apparel their child would wear to school. The school was, they said, arbitrary and unreasonable.¹

The court held that this was one of those instances where the paramount right of the parents give way to the interests of the public generally and that there was no hardship or indignity imposed upon the plaintiff or his son by it. The court declared that the safeguard of reasonableness would always be considered.²

¹Alvin W. Howard, "Student Dress, School Policies, and the Law," The Clearing House, XLI (February, 1967), 360.

²Ibid.

The need for adequate pupil control is so basic to the operation of free public schools that it is recognized by teachers, school officials, and legislators alike. In the event that a local board of education has no established rules and regulations, administrators and teachers may make and enforce such reasonable rules as are considered necessary. The key word is reasonable. The enforcement of a rule is not prohibited because it is unwise or inexpedient; it must clearly be unreasonable.

Administrators sometimes encourage conformity in dress in the hope that it will reduce the distractions of differences and help control behavior so that energies may be turned to the job at hand--education.¹ This course of action is supported in many ways by values which help American people adjust to a pluralistic society. These values are placed on conformity in such matters as housing, speech, and manners because they represent a basis of social exchange among people of different backgrounds.

In the area of student rights the principal is the man in the middle, a spot with which he is all too familiar. He is caught in the crossfire of multiple pressure groups asserting divergent, inconsistent, incompatible, and sometimes nebulous demands. To reconcile the pressure from teachers to terminate the attendance of the nonconforming student and the demand from the civil libertarians

¹Mary Ellen Roach, "Adolescent Dress, Understanding the Issues," Journal of Home Economics, LXI (November, 1969), 697.

to accord nonconformity a priority in the value system would require the patience of Job combined with the wisdom of Solomon. Similarly, to reconcile the rights of the individual students with the mores of the school community is no mean task. Add to this the admonition of administrative superordinates and school boards to refrain from 'rocking the boat' and we find the secondary principal in an awkward stance at best in the cross-currents of legality, morality, and vested interest.¹

The results of a nation-wide teacher opinion poll showed 86.8 per cent of the public school teachers think their school should have the authority to regulate the wearing apparel and personal grooming of students. Most of the teachers polled found these dress and grooming matters of the students to be a minor problem.²

There are two sides to the dress code issue. No two cases appear to be alike. Therefore, time and good wisdom on both sides will be the only way a logical compromise can occur.

II. PURPOSE OF THE DRESS CODE

If there is so much disagreement and hard feeling related to the dress code, why do many school districts still

¹William E. Griffiths, "Student Constitutional Rights: The Role of the Principal," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, No. 329 (September, 1968), 31.

²NEA Research Division, "Teacher Opinion Poll: Student Dress and Grooming," Today's Education, (May, 1969), 63.

have one written in their policy? There must be answers to this question.

It is clear that many school officials who establish rules and regulations for student dress and grooming believe that extremes in appearance go hand in hand with extremes in undesirable behavior. They feel that there is a positive correlation between appearance and conduct of students. Thus, it does not matter if extremes in dress are merely passing fads or a true change in fashion if, at this time, such extremes disrupt school discipline.¹

Many educators believe that work habits, behavior, and overall conduct improve with the adoption of a dress-up policy. School personnel believe students, parents, and the community need educating to the desirability of dressing and grooming in good taste.

There are times when the real issue of a defiant student lies deeper than the dress code. Students sometimes search far to find some subject with which to be defiant. A superintendent contends, "We have a responsibility to try to rehabilitate those who are defiant of regulations."²

¹Alvin W. Howard, "Student Dress, School Policies, and the Law," The Education Digest, (May, 1967), 37.

²Theresa Blackledge, "Glen's Haircut," Mississippi Educational Advance, LVIII (April, 1967), 31.

School authorities appear to be on fairly safe ground in establishing rules pertaining to student behavior and dress as long as the regulations relate to the efficient and orderly operation of the school. In addition, the regulations must be reasonable. In the absence of statutes as specific guidelines, the school may find itself challenged as being unreasonable, oppressive, or illegal.

A ruling which sums up the case for school board relations was handed down in a North Carolina case.

Schools, to be effective and fulfill the purposes for which they are intended, must be operated in an orderly manner. Machinery to that end must be provided. Reasonable rules and regulations must be adopted. The right to attend school and claim the benefits afforded by the public school system is the right to attend subject to all lawful rules and regulations prescribed for the government thereof. If the opinion of the court or jury is to be substituted for the judgment and discretion of the board at the will of a disaffected pupil, the government of our schools will be seriously impaired, and position of our school board in dealing with such cases will be most precarious.¹

¹Alvin W. Howard, "Student Dress, School Policies, and the Law," The Clearing House, XLI (February, 1967), 361.

III. LEGAL DECISIONS AFFECTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DRESS CODE POLICIES

LEONARD VS. SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF ATTLEBORO

The plaintiff, age seventeen, had been a professional musician since the age of twelve. He claimed that the appearance of his hair was essential to his image as a performer. The court, in sustaining the regulation of the board of education excluding students with extreme haircuts, said:

We need only perceive some rational basis for the rule requiring acceptable haircuts in order to sustain its validity...we are of the opinion that the unusual hair style of the plaintiff could disrupt and impede the maintenance of a proper classroom atmosphere or decorum.¹

The plaintiff argued that the school board was infringing on basic rights of parents. The court answered:

We are mindful that the regulation of haircuts may affect the private and personal lives of students more substantially than do restrictions regarding dress. Whereas the latter need not operate beyond the school premises, the former will inevitably do so...Here, the domain of family privacy must give way in so far as a regulation reasonably calculated to maintain school discipline may affect it. The right of other students, and the interest of teachers, administrators, and the community at large in a well run and efficient school system are paramount.²

¹Lee O. Garber and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., The Year-book of School Law (1967 Edition; Danville, Illinois: The Interstate printers and Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 249.

²Ibid., p. 250.

TINKER VS. DES MOINES INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

This case involved a school board's decision to prevent the wearing of black armbands (signifying the protest of hostilities in Vietnam and the support of a truce) by students. The lower courts all upheld the school board's decision. The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower courts for the following reason:

The wearing of armbands in the circumstances of this case was entirely divorced from actually a potentially disruptive conduct by those participating in it. It was closely akin to 'pure speech' which, we have repeatedly held, is entitled to comprehensive protection under the First Amendment.¹

BURNSIDE VS. BYARS

A number of students wore circular, one and one-half inch diameter buttons containing the wording "One Man One Vote" around the perimeter with "SNCC" printed in the middle. The principal announced he would not permit the wearing of such buttons in the school or classroom. The principal justified his stand as stating the buttons did not have any bearing upon the students education, would cause commotion, and would be disturbing to the school program. However, some

¹Lee O. Garber and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., The Yearbook of School Law (1970 Edition; Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 322.

students persisted in wearing these buttons. They were given a one-week suspension from school.

The Court of Appeals reversed the trial court's decision and invalidated the rule. It stated:

Wearing of buttons on collars or shirt fronts is certainly not in the class of those activities which inherently distract students and break down the regimentation of the classroom such as carrying banners, scattering leaflets, and speech-making, all of which have no place in an orderly classroom.¹

BLACKWELL VS. ISSAQUENA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

This case involved buttons similar to those cited in the previous (Burnside vs. Byars) case. The principal had banned the buttons following a disturbance by students noisily talking in the halls when they were to be in class. The population of "button wearers" grew and some were physically forced to wear buttons. Some two hundred students were suspended. The court, stating that the issue presented in this case was identical to that of Burnside vs. Byars, upheld the principal's decision to ban the buttons. The difference in this decision was based upon the fact that in the present case, there was a disturbance which the school authorities had a right, if not a duty, to quell.²

¹Lee O. Garber and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., The Yearbook of School Law (1968 Edition; Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 235.

²Ibid., p. 236.

FERRELL VS. DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

A group of high school students had formed a musical group, signed a contract with an agent, and insisted to school authorities that they were under contract to maintain their style of dress and their "Beatle type" hair style. The principal testified the boys' long hair caused trouble, commotion, attracted attention, and disrupted the classroom.

Immediately after being refused admittance to school, they went to a local recording studio and recorded a song which contained lyrics referring to their refused admission by the principal. The court upheld the school authorities' decision. The court reasoned that the terms upon which a public school education is granted cannot be fixed by the pupils themselves. The court found it inconceivable that a school administration could operate the school successfully if required by the judicial branch to follow the dictates of students as to what their appearance shall be.¹

One of the most important aims of the school should be to educate the individual to live successfully with other people in our democracy ...That is but another way of stating that society expects public education to concern itself with building your citizens as well as teaching the '3 R's'.²

¹Lee O. Garber and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., The Year-book of School Law (1968 Edition; Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1968), pp. 233-234.

²Ibid., p. 234.

PUGSLEY VS. SELLMEYER

This was an action brought by a student who, in 1923, had been disciplined for infringing a board rule that stated:

The wearing of transparent hosiery, low-necked dresses or any other style of clothing tending towards immodesty in dress, or the use of face paint or cosmetics, is prohibited.¹

She was accused of using talcum powder. The Lower Court ruled against her, and the higher court affirmed its decision.

The question...is not whether we approve this rule as one we would have made as directors of the district, nor are we required to find whether it was essential to the maintenance of discipline. On the contrary, we must uphold the rule unless we find that the directors have clearly abused their discretion, and that the rule is not one reasonably calculated to effect the purpose intended, that is, of promoting discipline in the school; and we do not so find.²

¹Lee O. Garber and Newton Edwards, The Law Governing Pupils (Series No. 4; Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 70.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the findings of the survey made, pertinent to the problem of this study. The purpose of this study was (1) to collect information concerning the attitudes of students, parents, and school faculty regarding a school "dress code" policy, and (2) to review laws and legislation involved in the enforcement of "dress codes" by school districts.

Three questionnaires were prepared and used to collect data. The items used in these questionnaires were composed by the Student Council of Fort Dodge Senior High School, Fort Dodge, Iowa. They were developed after considerable debate over dress code policies between parents, administrators, faculty, and students. The selected questionnaire was sent to each student in grade ten, eleven, and twelve, each parent of a student or students in grade ten, eleven, or twelve, and each school faculty member who taught grades ten, eleven, or twelve. These questionnaires were sent to the above mentioned members of both the Manson Senior High School of Manson, Iowa, and the Fort Dodge Senior High School of Fort Dodge, Iowa. Manson Senior High School has a 1969-1970 three-year average daily attendance of 215.31 students and Fort Dodge Senior High School has a 1969-1970 three-year average daily attendance of 1461.13 students.

I. AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

In this questionnaire students, parents, and faculty were asked if there would be a deterioration in the appearance of the student bodies of Fort Dodge Community School and Manson Community School if students had their own choice as to hair styles and clothing styles.

The data in Table I indicates 81.3 per cent of the Fort Dodge students and 77.5 per cent of the Manson students disagree or strongly disagree that a deterioration would take place. However, 78.1 per cent of the Fort Dodge parents, 77.6 per cent of the Manson parents, 79.4 per cent of the Fort Dodge faculty, and 83.3 per cent of the Manson faculty agree or strongly agree that a deterioration would take place.

Table II concerns the responsibility for dress code guidelines as well as enforcing these guidelines. In 2.8 per cent of the Fort Dodge students' responses the school was recognized as the controlling body. This is compared with 2.5 per cent of the responses of Manson students. The parents (in 14.5 per cent of the responses) of Fort Dodge students chose the school as the enforcing agency. This 14.5 per cent is compared to only 1.7 per cent of the Manson parents. In 18.2 per cent of the Fort Dodge faculty responses it was felt that the school should be responsible for enforcing

TABLE I

THERE WOULD BE A DETERIORATION IN THE APPEARANCE OF THE STUDENT BODIES OF
MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL IF STUDENTS
HAD THEIR OWN CHOICE AS TO HAIR STYLES AND CLOTHING

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S				P A R E N T S				F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Strongly Agree	44	3.0	4	2.0	329	33.9	18	31.0	27	39.7	7	38.9
Agree	235	15.7	42	20.5	427	44.2	27	46.6	27	39.7	8	44.4
Disagree	760	50.7	124	60.4	172	17.8	11	19.0	11	16.1	3	16.7
Strongly Disagree	459	30.6	35	17.1	39	4.1	1	3.4	3	0.5	0	0.0

TABLE II

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTING GUIDELINES AS WELL AS
ENFORCING THE STUDENT DRESS CODE RESTS WITH:

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S				P A R E N T S				F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
The School	42	2.8	5	2.5	148	14.5	1	1.7	12	18.2	0	0.0
The Parents	344	23.1	23	11.2	139	13.7	6	10.3	4	6.1	1	5.5
The Student Council	522	35.0	104	50.7	54	5.3	3	5.2	1	1.5	0	0.0
A Combination	583	39.1	73	35.6	677	66.5	48	82.8	49	74.2	17	94.5

the dress code. Not one faculty member on the Manson staff agreed that the school should be responsible.

The students of Fort Dodge believe the parents should set the guidelines and enforce the dress code in 23.1 per cent of the responses. Manson students chose this response in 11.2 per cent of the replies. However, the parents recognized themselves as being held responsible in only 13.7 per cent of the Fort Dodge replies and 10.3 per cent of the Manson replies. The Fort Dodge faculty held the parents responsible for administering the dress code in 6.1 per cent of the responses while the Manson faculty recognized this fact in 5.5 per cent of their replies.

It is interesting to note the responses given the student council as the agent responsible for dress code enactment and enforcement. In 35.0 per cent of the replies of the Fort Dodge students and 50.7 per cent of the replies of the Manson students they recognized the student council as the one held responsible. However, 5.3 per cent of the Fort Dodge parents, 5.2 per cent of the Manson parents, 1.5 per cent of the Fort Dodge faculty, and 0.0 per cent of the Manson faculty recognized the student council as their choice.

A combination of school, parents, and student council being held responsible for setting guidelines and enforcing student dress codes was the choice of 39.1 per cent of the

Fort Dodge students, 35.6 per cent of the Manson students, 66.5 per cent of the parents of Fort Dodge students, 82.8 per cent of the parents of Manson students, 74.2 per cent and 94.5 per cent of the Fort Dodge and Manson faculties respectively.

Table III shows the results of the question, "As parents, would you allow your son or daughter complete freedom of dress and hair styles?", asked of parents and faculty members.

TABLE III

AS PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL
OR MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL, WOULD YOU ALLOW YOUR
SON OR DAUGHTER COMPLETE FREEDOM OF DRESS AND
HAIR STYLE? (PARENTS AND FACULTY
RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	P A R E N T S				F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Yes	92	9.5	6	10.3	5	7.9	0	0.0
No	874	90.5	52	89.7	58	92.1	18	100.0

Fort Dodge parents answered yes in 9.5 per cent of the responses and no in 90.5 per cent of the responses. Manson parents followed almost the same ratio (10.3 per cent answered yes and 89.7 per cent answered no). The Fort Dodge faculty

answered yes in 7.9 per cent of the questionnaires and no in 92.1 per cent of the questionnaires. Manson faculty members chose the no response in 100.0 per cent of their responses.

The students, parents, and faculty were asked if the dress code policy of their school should be continued in its present form, modified, or discontinued. The results of this question are summarized in Table IV.

Only 5.3 per cent of the students of Fort Dodge and 4.4 per cent of the students of Manson suggested the dress code policy should be continued in its present form. Conversely, 60.0 per cent of the Fort Dodge students' parents stated the dress code policy should be continued in its present form. In 47.8 per cent of the responses of the Fort Dodge faculty and 44.4 per cent of the responses of the Manson faculty it was decided to continue the policy in its present form.

A modification of the present dress code policy was indicated by 40.5 per cent of the Fort Dodge students and 35.1 per cent of the Manson students. The parents of the Fort Dodge students suggested, in 27.9 per cent of the responses, that the dress code be modified while 20.7 per cent of the parents of Manson students wished the policy to be modified. Faculty members saw modification as their choice in 31.3 per cent of the responses while 44.4 per cent of the faculty members of Manson indicated this choice.

TABLE IV

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND FACULTY MEMBERS AS TO THE
FUTURE OF THE DRESS CODE IN THE FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND THE
MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S				P A R E N T S				F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson		Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Continued in its present form	79	5.3	9	4.4	580	60.0	39	67.3	32	47.8	8	44.4
Modified	603	40.5	72	35.1	270	27.9	12	20.7	21	31.3	8	44.4
Discontinued	807	54.2	124	60.5	117	12.1	7	12.0	14	20.9	2	11.2

Over one-half (54.2 per cent of Fort Dodge and 60.5 per cent of Manson) of the students wished the current dress code to be discontinued. Fort Dodge parents chose a discontinuance in 12.1 per cent of their responses while Manson parents chose this discontinuance in 12.0 per cent of their responses. In 20.9 per cent of the responses of the Fort Dodge faculty and 11.2 per cent of the responses of the Manson faculty it was decided the dress code policies to be discontinued.

The students were asked if they would take advantage of the situation by dressing in an extreme manner if the dress codes were abolished. Table V summarizes their responses.

TABLE V

IF THE DRESS CODES WERE ABOLISHED, WOULD YOU, AS STUDENTS OF FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL OR MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION BY DRESSING IN AN EXTREME MANNER? (STUDENT RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S			
	Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Yes	47	3.1	4	2.0
No	1449	96.9	201	98.0

Only a small minority or 3.1 per cent of the Fort Dodge students and 2.0 per cent of the Manson students stated they would take advantage of a "no dress code" situation. The majority of the students in Fort Dodge (96.9 per cent) and Manson (98.0 per cent) suggested they would not take advantage of the situation by dressing in an extreme manner if the dress codes were abolished.

The Fort Dodge Community School faculty and the Manson Community School faculty were asked if they felt the dress codes of their schools had a positive, negative, or indifferent affect upon the educational program of their school system. Table VI recorded these results.

TABLE VI

THE TYPE OF AFFECT THE DRESS CODE HAS UPON THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND THE MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL (FACULTY RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Positive	46	72.0	13	72.2
Negative	9	14.0	1	5.5
Indifferent	9	14.0	4	22.3

In 72.0 per cent of the Fort Dodge faculty responses and 72.2 per cent of the Manson faculty responses it was stated that the dress code had a positive affect upon the educational program. The Fort Dodge faculty indicated a negative response in 14.0 per cent of their responses while the Manson faculty responded with a 5.5 per cent negative response. It was indicated, in 14.0 per cent of the Fort Dodge faculty responses and 22.3 per cent of the Manson faculty responses, that the dress code had neither a positive nor a negative affect upon the educational program of their school.

Table VII indicates the results of the students' responses as to whether the discontinuance of the dress code would interfere or hinder the process of education in the school system.

TABLE VII

WOULD THE DISCONTINUANCE OF THE DRESS CODE INTERFERE
OR HINDER THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION IN YOUR
SCHOOL? (STUDENT RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S			
	Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Yes	115	7.6	11	5.4
No	1389	92.4	194	94.6

The Fort Dodge students felt the educational process would not be disrupted by a 92.4 per cent response. Manson students stated the educational process would not be disrupted in 94.6 per cent of their responses.

The Fort Dodge Community School and the Manson Community School faculties were asked if the educational atmosphere of the school would suffer if the dress code were abolished. The results of this question are recorded in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

WOULD THE EDUCATIONAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND THE MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL SUFFER IF THE DRESS CODE WERE ABOLISHED? (FACULTY RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	F A C U L T Y			
	Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Yes	47	70.9	8	44.5
No	19	29.1	10	55.5

The Fort Dodge faculty stated yes in 70.9 per cent of their replies and no in 29.1 per cent of their replies. The Manson faculty stated yes in 44.5 per cent of their replies and no in 55.5 per cent of their replies.

The final table (Table IX) shows the results of the students being asked if they felt their respective dress codes were administered in a fair and consistent manner.

TABLE IX

AS STUDENTS OF FORT DODGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND MANSON COMMUNITY SCHOOL, DO YOU FEEL THE CURRENT DRESS CODE IS ADMINISTERED IN A FAIR AND CONSISTENT MANNER? (STUDENT RESPONSES ONLY)

I T E M S	S T U D E N T S			
	Fort Dodge		Manson	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Yes	216	14.0	36	17.6
No	1326	86.0	169	82.4

Fort Dodge students stated yes in 14.0 per cent and no in 86.0 per cent of their replies. Manson students felt their dress code was administered in a fair and consistent manner in 17.6 per cent of their responses while 82.4 per cent responded in a negative manner.

I. SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

At the end of each questionnaire, the clients were encouraged to write additional comments concerning their attitudes and feelings toward the dress code of their respective school. The following are selected comments taken from the questionnaires of students, parents of students, Fort Dodge High School faculty, and Manson High School faculty.

STUDENTS

1. "Because a person wears his hair long or dresses differently does not mean that his appearance has deteriorated. This is nothing more than an adult opinion. School officials have absolutely no right to tell us what to wear. Parents do have some right."
2. "People shouldn't care how you dress. If the school would show more interest in the students' education rather than worry about the students' appearance, we would have a great school."
3. "I believe it is our constitutional right to dress and look the way we want to look."
4. "I think that if the dress code were abolished, there would be fewer discipline problems. Kids resent

very much being told how to wear their clothing and hair. It only makes them rebellious."

5. "The administration worries way too much about trivialities like dress codes. Schools are far from perfect. They could exert their energy in more useful ways."
6. "I believe, because this is a public school, the students should be allowed to wear what they want with the only restrictions being placed on them by their parents. Some students may take advantage of this, but that is their choice--living in a democracy."
7. "The school should treat us like adults if they want us to act like adults."
8. "I see no reason for a dress code because I feel a person has a right to dress how he wants and wherever he wants. I don't think the way we dress has anything to do with how we learn in school."
9. "The students do not tell the teachers what to wear or how to wear their hair. Hence, the school should not tell the student what to wear. It should be up to the parents and the individual student."

PARENTS

1. "I feel a modification should be made in reference to the dress code policy regarding boots for boys. Starting a year ago, the style trend was to a boot type shoe. It has been so popular of late that one could hardly find anything for Fall that wasn't a boot of some kind. About 60 to 70 per cent of the lines that we see are boots of some kind or another--the dress code says that they cannot be worn..."
2. "Although possibly old-fashioned, as parents it has always been our belief that the school should set the rules as it has done in the past. Any fair rule as to discipline and code of dress set by the school should be backed by the parents. We, as parents, are still of the opinion that the experience of years gives parents and educators a much greater advantage in rational thinking and behavior than possible with a child of school age, either junior high or senior high school."
3. "I would say that the greater responsibility of dress code enforcement lies with the parents, and cooperation should be expected from the students. After all, the students are hardly capable of making rational choices."

4. "People in general seem to act the part in which they are dressed. They act differently when dressed very casually than when dressed in "good" clothes or in a neat manner."
5. "In our opinion dress codes are unnecessary. By high school most students are mature enough to choose their clothes and hair styles. Where is a better place to show some individuality? Their peers will keep them in line..."
6. "We feel parents should have the say as to how their children should dress. However, when some parents don't care, it makes it hard to discipline your own without school rules."
7. "It's very hard to set an effective dress code with today's varying styles. If the parents would take the responsibility the decision should be with them. I realize that some of the problems of the student body are unknown to me but, I firmly believe the dress code and the enforcement of the dress code should not be held over the students as a means of punishment."
8. "There should be less emphasis on the dress code and more on academic achievement. I personally do not care for long hair on boys, but who am I to say it is wrong. Adults too often judge teenagers by their appearance."

9. "I believe the long hair is here to stay for a while and it really shouldn't matter how long it is if it is clean and combed. Sometimes there is too much emphasis placed on the way the youngsters dress and not enough emphasis placed on their education. After all, I send my children to school to learn something and it shouldn't really matter how they look as long as they are clean."
10. "It would be almost impossible to do much with the length of the skirts, as you can walk down the street any day of the week and find the skirts shamefully short on adults."
11. "By following the dress code it shows respect. If there was no dress code, there would be too many who would take advantage of their styles of dress. I feel the students still have to be advised in high school."
12. "I feel that children, for the most part, should have the responsibility of choosing for themselves how they will look. I think a dress code is rarely enforced but, instead, usually changed from year to year to accommodate students change in styles. I feel the dress codes should be abolished."

SCHOOL FACULTY

1. "I feel that if the dress code were discontinued it would be another breakdown in discipline and heaven knows we don't need any more of that."
2. "I hate to have the school dictate what students should wear, but if parents aren't concerned, someone has to be concerned. A dress code is great if it is enforced by everyone."
3. "It would be preferable to have no dress code than to have a dress code that is not enforced. Any dress code should be reviewed and altered every year to adjust to changing styles."
4. "The dress code, as it stands now, is ambiguous in wording and difficult to interpret and enforce. If abolished, it would be up to the parents to keep appearances from becoming too extreme and disruptive."
5. "During the 1969-1970 school year it has never been enforced and, consequently, it has had an indifferent affect upon the educational program."

This chapter included data presentation, tabulation and analysis of response, and comments from selected students, parents, and school faculty members.

CHAPTER IV

I. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

It was the purpose of this study (1) to collect information concerning the attitudes of students, parents, and school faculty regarding a school "dress code" policy, and (2) to review laws and legislation involved in the enforcement of "dress codes" by the school district. This study was basically a data gathering project. As the sample for this study was selective and small in number, one can make no definite conclusion as to the arguments for and against a dress code policy. Rather, this writer attempted to bring together both sides of the issue of dress code policies.

Researchers seem to agree that teaching is a complex business involving more than common and stable factors. The continued study of school-community problems should help to illuminate any future problems which administrators will be certain to encounter.

This study was limited to information gathered from a sample of two school districts in the State of Iowa who, in 1969-1970, were employing a dress code policy. The sample included all students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, all parents of students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, and school faculty associated with grades ten, eleven, and twelve in the two districts. It did not attempt to interpret

possible misinterpretation of the questions on the questionnaire or the honesty of the answers and comments.

A questionnaire was used in this study to solicit answers and comments to preselected questions concerning the Fort Dodge Community School District's and the Manson Community School District's dress code policies.

II. CONCLUSIONS

By tabulating the results of each questionnaire, one can determine there is a definite communication breakdown between teenagers and adults with reference to school dress code policies. Parents want to advise their youngster as to his style of dress and appearance. However, parents felt they needed a "lever" to help force this style of dress and appearance on their teenager. This "lever" was the school dress code policy.

Teenagers felt quite certain they could select their own wearing apparel and decide for themselves how they should appear at school. They felt quite resentful, and sometimes almost rebellious, as to the fact that they were told how to dress, act, etc.

Courts have decided the key word to be "reasonable" when a school district tries to enforce a dress code. Many cases have been ruled for or against the plaintiff by applying the rule of reasonableness.

There is a need for further study of school districts' dress code policies due to the inconsistency of enforcement evidenced by responses of students, parents, and school faculty members. Many teenagers and adults felt the school districts should spend their time on problems much more important than the dress and appearance of a student. As further studies of school-community problems are made, it is feasible that a solution will be found as to the responsibility of the school in relation to student dress and appearance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FORT DODGE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DRESS CODE FORT DODGE, IOWA

1. Clothes should be neat and clean.
2. Hair should be kept trimmed and not worn in an "unusual" style ("off the ears, collar and out of the eyes").
3. T-shirts should not be worn as an outer garment to take the place of a shirt or sweater.
4. Shirts - all the buttons should be buttoned with the exception of the collar button, which is optional, buttoned or unbuttoned.
5. Shirts and blouses which are designed to be tucked in should be worn in, those designed to be worn out may be worn out if properly designed for school wear.
6. Trousers should be worn as style permits.
7. Bottoms of trouser legs should be worn outside or over the top of shoes or boots, not tucked in the top.
8. No lettered or numbered sweatshirts or T-shirts should be worn.
9. Skirt and dress lengths shall be in good taste and not conspicuous by their brevity. Culottes may be worn.
10. Boys shall be clean shaven.
11. Belts shall be worn on trousers designed for belts.
12. Dark glasses shall not be worn without a valid excuse.

APPENDIX B

MANSON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DRESS CODE MANSON, IOWA

Code of Dress for Boys:

1. Be neat, clean and smooth shaven.
2. No numbered football jerseys to be worn except to football games.
3. No T-shirts or sweatshirts with writing, except those with college or MHS insignias.
4. Tapered shirt-tails must be worn inside trousers on all school property from the beginning of the school day and until ten minutes after school is dismissed.
5. Belts must be worn with pants that require belts.
6. Socks must be worn to school and on all school sponsored trips.
7. No "frayed" jeans, slacks, or shirts.
8. No boots may be worn (by either boys or girls).
9. Only top button on shirts may be unbuttoned.
10. Boys' hair shall not touch eyebrows in the manner worn and must stay out of eyes at all times. It shall not go over the ears or hang over back of collar. Sideburns shall be permissible to the length of bottom of the ear providing they are kept straight and short.
11. Any student sent home to change clothes or to get hair cut must make up the time after school.
12. Students shall dress up for school sponsored trips, particularly for after-dinner or evening trips.
13. Bell bottom trousers may be worn if all material is the same color or pattern.

Code of Dress for Girls:

1. Any culottes or pant dresses which are hardly distinguishable from regular dresses or skirts are acceptable.
2. Length of skirts: no extremes; depends on prevailing style.
3. Hair should be clean and combed.
4. Make up: no extremes will be tolerated. Eye shadow is not to be worn during the school day.
5. May wear slacks or wool bermudas to athletic contests; no cut-offs or cotton shorts.
6. Students should dress up for school-sponsored trips, particularly for after-dinner or evening trips.
7. Blouses with tails cannot be worn out-side skirts.
8. Most important rule is to dress neatly and appropriately.
9. Any student sent home to change clothes must make up the time after school.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

GRADE LEVEL: 10 11 12
(CIRCLE)

1. If students were free to wear their clothes and hair styles of their choice, there would be a deterioration in the appearance of the student body. ("x" a response)

___(1) Strongly Agree
___(2) Agree
___(3) Disagree
___(4) Strongly Disagree
2. If the dress code were abolished, would you take advantage of the situation by dressing in an extreme manner?

___Yes ___No
3. In your opinion, the responsibility for setting guidelines as well as implementing and enforcing the student dress code should rest with ("x" a response)

___(1) The School
___(2) The Parents
___(3) The Student Council as Representatives of the Student Body
___(4) Combination of All the Above
4. Do you think that discontinuance of the dress code would interfere or hinder the process of education in our school?

___Yes ___No
5. Do you feel that our current dress code is administered in a fair and consistent manner?

___Yes ___No
6. Speaking as a student, I recommend that the student dress code should be ("x" a response)

___(1) Continued in its present form
___(2) Modified
___(3) Discontinued

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX D

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. If students were free to wear their clothes and hair styles of their choice, there would be a deterioration in the appearance of the student body. ("x" a response)

☐ (1) Strongly Agree
☐ (2) Agree
☐ (3) Disagree
☐ (4) Strongly Disagree

2. If the dress code were abolished, would you allow your son or daughter complete freedom in his or her choice of school dress and hair style?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. In your opinion, the responsibility for setting guidelines as well as implementing and enforcing the student dress code should rest with ("x" a response)

☐ (1) The School
☐ (2) The Parents
☐ (3) The Student Council as Representatives of the Student Body
☐ (4) Combination of all of the Above

4. Speaking as a parent, I recommend to the Student Council that the Student Dress Code should be ("x" a response)

☐ (1) Continued in its present form
☐ (2) Modified
☐ (3) Discontinued

5. I currently have children enrolled in the following grades at the senior high school ("x" a response)

☐ 10th grade
☐ 11th grade
☐ 12th grade

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX E

FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. If students were free to wear their clothes and hair styles of their choice, there would be a deterioration in the appearance of the student body. ("x" a response)
☐ (1) Strongly Agree
☐ (2) Agree
☐ (3) Disagree
☐ (4) Strongly Disagree
2. If the dress code were abolished, would you allow your son or daughter complete freedom in his or her choice in school dress and hair style?
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. In your opinion, the responsibility for setting guidelines as well as implementing and enforcing the student dress code should rest with ("x" a response)
☐ (1) The School
☐ (2) The Parents
☐ (3) The Student Council as Representatives of the Student Body
☐ (4) Combination of All of the Above
4. As a faculty member, do you regard the dress code as having a ("x" a response)
☐ (1) Positive affect upon the educational program
☐ (2) Negative affect upon the educational program
☐ (3) Indifferent affect upon the educational program
5. Do you think that if the dress code were abolished, the educational atmosphere would be hurt after the novelty of it wore off?
☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Speaking as a faculty member, I recommend to the student council that the student dress code should be ("x" a response)
☐ (1) Continued in its present form
☐ (2) Modified
☐ (3) Discontinued

COMMENTS: